



Congressman Tim Bishop

FIRST DISTRICT -- NEW YORK

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BISHOP PUSHES FOR SENATE ACTION ON BEACH FUNDING

Sends Letter with Rep. Israel Urging Consideration of Bishop's Bill

Washington, DC - Congressmen Tim Bishop and Steve Israel sent a letter this week to the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee urging consideration of a House-passed bill authored by Bishop to provide \$40 million for clean water monitoring of the nation's beaches. On the heels of a troubling new report issued by the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) indicating that beach closings due to pollution are up throughout the country, Israel and Bishop are working to safeguard beachgoers. The NRDC report is based on information recently compiled by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) concerning beach closings and pollution.

"We need to do more to safeguard the health and safety of our families when they visit our nation's beaches," Bishop said. "It's baffling that while we're in the thick of the most popular months for visiting the beach, the federal program that pays to keep ocean visitors safe was allowed to expire. The Beach Act is a wise investment because it saves tens of millions of dollars for tourism-related industries, which contribute significantly to Long Island's economy. It also helps cut down on the number of sick days by protecting people from swimming in contaminated water."

Congressman Steve Israel, who is a cosponsor of the legislation and co-chair of the Long Island Sound Caucus stated, "Long Island has some of the most beautiful beaches in the country and we have a responsibility to keep them that way," said Israel. "As Co-Chair of the Long Island Sound Caucus, I'm pleased to join Congressman Bishop in this important effort that will preserve these national treasures that greatly contribute to economic development in our community."

"On Long Island, 29 beaches in Nassau County and 72 beaches in Suffolk County exceeded water quality standards in 2005. Funding is needed to monitor our beaches so that a day at the beach can be a wonderful and healthy experience not a risky experience," said Adrienne Esposito Executive Director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment, an organization dedicated to advancing stronger environmental policy.

Bishop's bill, the Beach Act, H.R. 1721, authorizes \$40 million in grants for clean water monitoring under the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act of 2000. The legislation passed the U.S. House of Representatives in December of 2005, but has yet to be considered in the Senate.

A copy of Bishop and Israel's letter follows:

August 7, 2006

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
SD-140 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6175

The Honorable James M. Jeffords
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
SH-145 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Jeffords,

We are writing to request your support and assistance with further consideration of the "Beach Act" (H.R. 1721), a bill passed by the House last year that expands funding for water quality monitoring under the highly successful federal Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) program.

As you may be aware from data recently compiled by the Environmental Protection Agency, the number of beach closings and pollution advisories has increased significantly. Last year alone, more than 20,000 closings and health advisories at ocean, bay and Great Lakes beaches demonstrate that our beaches suffer from considerable pollution.

In fact, 200 beaches in over two dozen states violated water-sampling standards at least 25 percent of the time. Still, current beach water quality standards are 20 years old and rely on outdated monitoring methods, threatening the health and safety of American beachgoers who remain vulnerable to a broad range of waterborne pathogens. Accordingly, we must insist that the EPA update its guidelines, while making sure that Congress does not allow the programs administered by the BEACH Act to lapse.

The expired BEACH Act funding is reauthorized under H.R. 1721, which is awaiting further consideration by your committee. With only a few weeks remaining in the 109th Congress and even fewer days remaining for American families to enjoy public beaches this summer, we strongly encourage you to mark up this bill and report it to the full Senate.

We look forward to working with you to preserve the integrity and beauty of our beaches for the enjoyment of all families, visitors, and future generations of Americans. Thank you for your attention and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Tim Bishop
Member of Congress

Steve Israel
Member of Congress

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